

# THE MENTOR

"A Wise and Faithful Guide and Friend"

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No. 3

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## WASHINGTON THE CAPITAL

THE CAPITOL

THE WHITE HOUSE

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

MEMORIAL CONTINENTAL HALL

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

MOUNT VERNON

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WASHINGTON, THE BEAUTIFUL," is a phrase that has in it something of patriotism, something of promise. We Americans cannot look upon Washington as we do on other cities. We see it first and foremost as our nation's Capital, and we celebrate the beauty that is truly there while condoning much else. The foreigner to whom this beauty is pointed out sees the beauty too, but the shabby spots that still exist do not escape his eye. His unbiased judgment pronounces Washington a city of growing beauty, with some of its promises still unfulfilled.

Washington has been in the course of construction since it was first planned in 1790. At that time the Continental Congress was holding its sessions in Philadelphia. It was important that the Government should have a local habitation of its own, and George Washington suggested the district now known as Columbia. This tract of ten miles square, on the

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Potomac, was obtained by the Government from the States of Maryland and Virginia. At that time it seemed as though a central and convenient point had been selected, a fact curious enough when we look at the map of the United States today, and see territory stretching nearly three thousand miles west from Washington to the Pacific and less than one hundred miles east to the Atlantic.

## THE STREETS AND AVENUES OF WASHINGTON

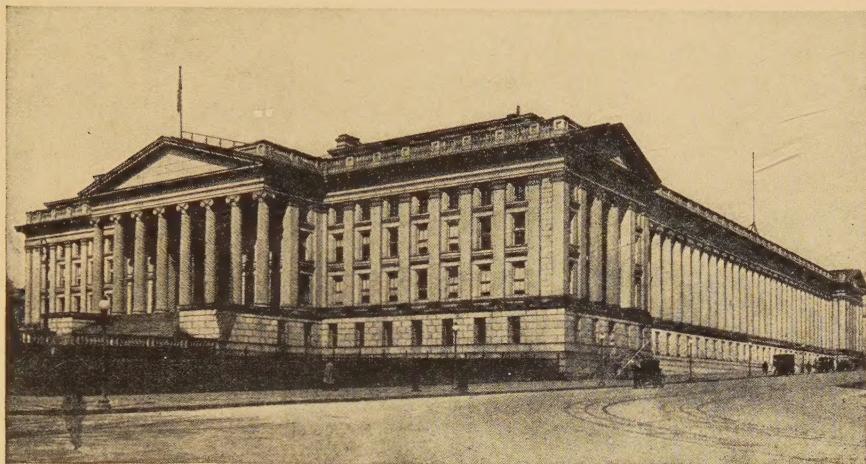
The plan of Washington was conceived by Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, a French engineer and an officer in the American Army. In general the city plan may be described as a wheel laid on a gridiron. The Capitol is the hub of the wheel; from it radiate streets like spokes, and these streets are intersected by other streets laid in rectangular lines. This combination gives a varied effect in odd corners and open circles and squares that are picturesque and beautiful. The spokes of the great wheel are wide, well shaded avenues named after the States. The intersecting streets that run north and south are numbered; those that run east and west are named by the letters of the alphabet.

That, in brief, is the plan of Washington, but it is being modified by the superb building scheme of Mr. D. H. Burnham, the celebrated architect. In the Congressional Library there is a plaster model in miniature of what may be truly called "Washington the Beautiful." There we find a long parkway stretching from the Capitol to the Washington Monument, lined with splendid public buildings. As we look at this plan it is hard to believe



MODEL OF THE NEW WASHINGTON

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THE UNITED STATES TREASURY

that the territory on which this noble city stands was once nothing but a piece of swampy woodland; but it is not so hard, perhaps, as it would have been for the citizen of that day to see in those low stretches the wonderful city that will be fully realized in our generation. Part of it at least was in the imagination of the first engineer and builders, for Washington was laid out from the start in ample dimensions. The people of that day found food in this for satire and Washington was called "The City of Magnificent Distances." Distances there were, then, and scarcely anything more. We have an interesting light on this from a distinguished source. This is what the poet, Thomas Moore, wrote of our seat of Government, as he saw it in 1804:

"An Embryo Capital, where Fancy sees  
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees,  
Where second-sighted Seers the plain adorn  
With fanes unbuilt and heroes yet unborn,  
Though naught but woods and Jefferson they see,  
Where streets should run and sages ought to be."

## WASHINGTON OF INTEREST TO EVERYONE

Washington is so many things to visitors. It is one thing to the member of Congress; it is another thing to the foreign diplomatic officer and a far different thing to the regular resident—and to the thousands of visitors from all parts of the country and the world it is too many things to enumerate. Ask your friends who have visited Washington what has impressed them most. It will be interesting to note the varied answers you receive. The distinguished public citizen of your

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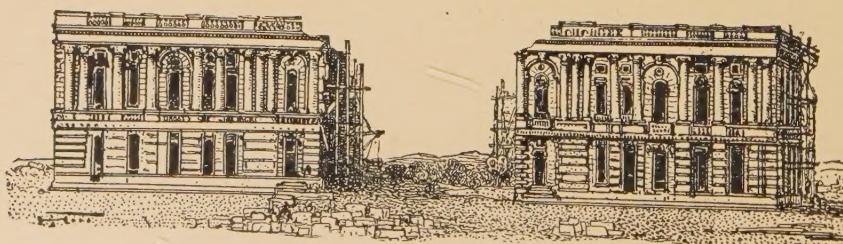
town may say, "The Capitol"; your literary friend, especially if artistic in taste, will no doubt say, "The Congressional Library"; the imaginative miss of eighteen may exclaim, "The Washington Monument first of all—cool, gray white in the morning, blue in the midst of mist, and rosy-tinted at sundown. The buildings are fine, but the Monument is a friend." The daughter of the American Revolution will naturally select first "Memorial Continental Hall," the palatial home that her patriotic society has founded. Others may mention the White House first, or some one of the great Department buildings; while many in whom the patriotic pulse beats strongly will answer without hesitation, "First of all Mount Vernon."

## THE MAJESTIC CAPITOL

The wisdom and foresight of those who planned Washington is significantly shown in the choice of the position of the Capitol. There on its hilltop this impressive building is the observed of all objects in the city. Capitol it is in every sense, for it is the very head and forefront of Washington, and its towering dome, capped by Crawford's statue of Liberty, crowns and commands the whole city. The Capitol is a growth from a comparatively simple building, and it has taken seventy years to reach its present dimensions.

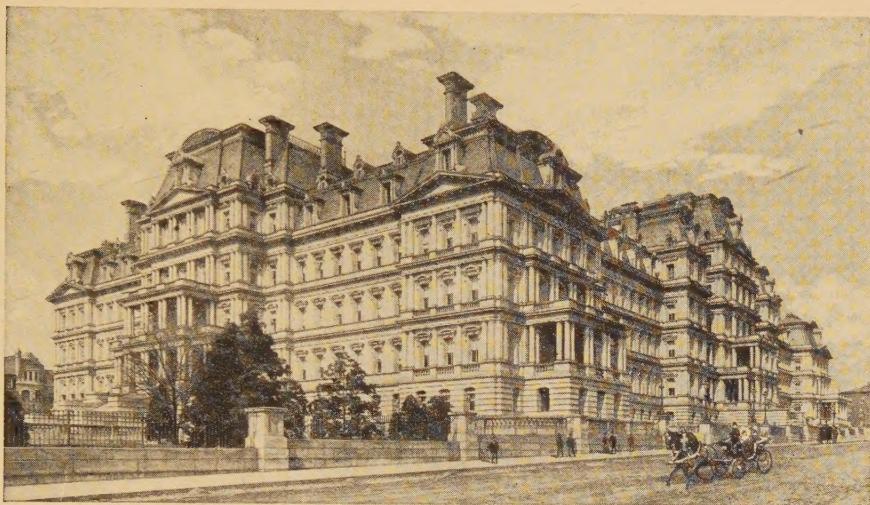
The total cost of construction and improvements, including the terraces and grounds, was something over fourteen millions—far less than that of several of our State capitols that have been erected since. The corner-stone was laid by Washington in 1793. Since then the work of the building has been carried on by many hands. The structure itself has passed through two fires, and it was finally completed in 1867, when it was pronounced a "Monument of Beauty," expressive in the best sense of the state of the arts at that time in this country.

In the minds of the thoughtful the spirit of things unseen haunts the Capitol. The old "Hall of Representatives," now "Statuary Hall," is a Chamber of Whispers. In the dome is a mysterious whispering



THE CAPITOL IN 1812

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STATE, WAR AND NAVY DEPARTMENTS

gallery. But, to the student of American History, the whole of this wonderful building is filled with significant whispers. Every square inch of its floor has its historical interest. Could its walls give back all that they have heard, we could hear the story of the making of our nation in the words of its makers.

Recently the interior of the Capitol has undergone considerable rearrangement, owing to the completion of the magnificent new office buildings for members of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the transferring of the offices, caucus and committee rooms that have for many years crowded the Capitol. These stately buildings were so planned that they would in no way detract from the architectural dominance of the Capitol, but help to make it still more imposing.

As we gaze at that superb East Front, our eyes scale the great sweep of ascending steps and we find at the right the Chamber of our Senate, at the left the Hall of our Representatives, in the center the Supreme Court, and above the whole structure the great dome on which the Statue of Liberty stands. There is our Government—the Legislative and the Judiciary. From the top of those steps we can look down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, the dwelling of the Executive.

## THE WHITE HOUSE THE PRESIDENT'S HOME

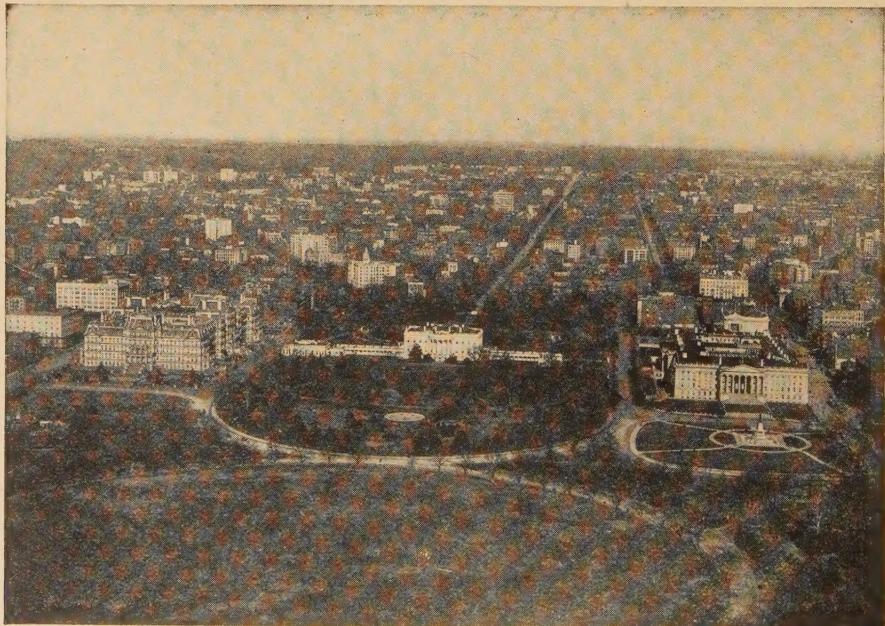
The site of the White House was chosen by Washington and the building was designed by Hoban. The British burned it in 1814, and, when restored, it was painted white to cover the marks of fire. It is a tribute

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to the taste and judgment of the architects that this simple stately building holds its own among the mansions of our country even in this day of magnificent homes—while it is unique in the history, personal and political, that has been written into all its fine features.

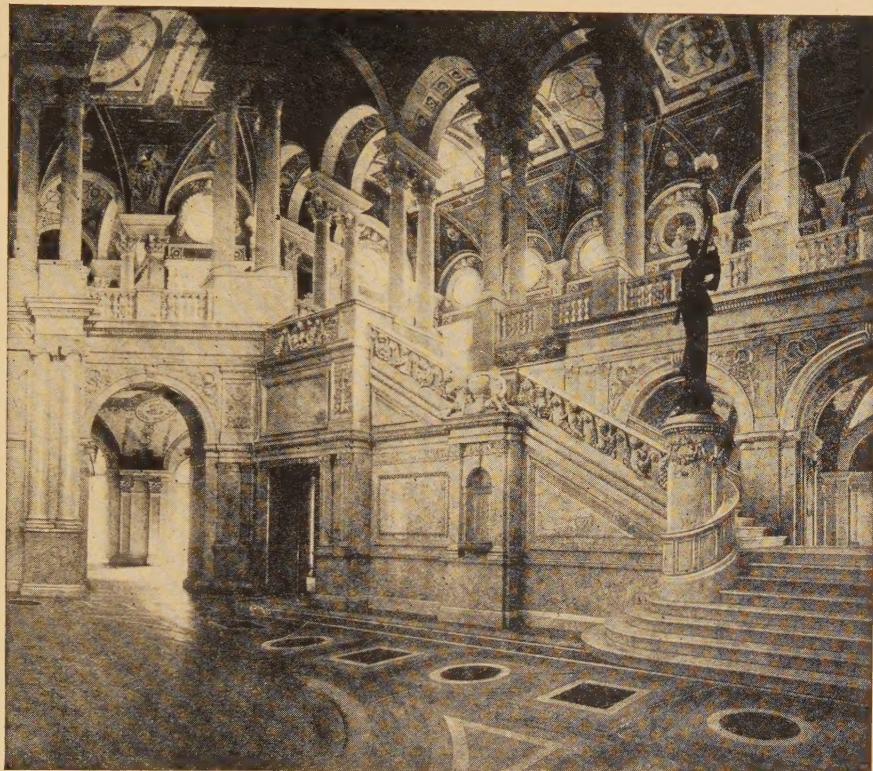
There are certain rooms in the White House that are known to the public. There is the great East Room with its profusion of gilding and mirrors and rich chandeliers. Here, gorgeously arrayed assemblies have gathered on state occasions. There is the Green Room at the southern end, containing notable portraits of Presidents, and the Blue Room which bows out in the center of the colonnade of the south front. Besides these, the public is familiar with the state Dining Room and the Cabinet Room. In these apartments the social functions of our Government have taken place for nearly a century, varying in character according to the temperament and tastes of the Chief Executive that occupied them.

Recently it has been realized that the building is inadequate for all the purposes it has to serve and plans for a new White House have been drawn. No definite conclusion has been reached, for the plan is not an easy one to realize. The traditions of our present White House are not easy to transfer.



VIEW OF WHITE HOUSE FROM WASHINGTON MONUMENT

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STAIRCASE IN CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY

## CONGRESSIONAL LIBRARY THIRD LARGEST IN THE WORLD

The Library of Congress was originally in the Capitol, and it consisted in 1802 of only 3,000 books. These were destroyed by fire in 1814 and a new Library was started with the purchase of Thomas Jefferson's books. It is now the third largest library in the world.

It is not so much the collection, however, as the building itself that attracts visitors to Washington today. It is doubtful if there is any structure in the world that combines so many varied features of beauty. The building was begun in 1886 and completed in 1897. It is expressive, therefore, of all that is best in modern architectural and decorative art. The decorations are entirely the work of American architects, painters and sculptors, numbering in all more than fifty, so that the building is a magnificent exhibit and memorial of our native art and ability.

The Library has been referred to as a Museum of Literature and Art. The Library is a finer thing than this. It is one magnificent harmonious structure in which all the features bear a proper relation to the one great

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dominating plan, which was to construct a national temple dedicated to the best in art and literature of our nation at the present time.

## MEMORIAL CONTINENTAL HALL

Memorial Continental Hall, the marble mansion built by the Daughters of the American Revolution at a cost of \$700,000, occupies a position facing the park before the White House, where its noble structural features can be seen to the best advantage. Aside from the beauty of its design, there is much thought that has gone into its construction. The various features have been contributed in a spirit of loyalty and devotion by different State chapters of the society. The portico at the south is a memorial to the thirteen original States. It is supported by thirteen fine classic columns, each of which cost \$3,000. These were paid for by the thirteen States, and are named after the States in the order in which they entered the Union.

The building has a very handsome auditorium with galleries, seating nearly two thousand, and in this the annual conventions of the society are held. On the platform is a reproduction of the desk on which the Declaration of Independence was signed and of the chair in which the presiding officer, John Hancock, sat at the time of the signing.

There are a number of special State memorial rooms in the building, and a National Board Room, a Library, a collection of Revolutionary relics, a Banquet Hall, private Dining Room and a Rest Room. It has been the purpose, in all the work of construction and interior decoration of the building, to sound the patriotic note. And so, throughout this most interesting building, the visitor is greeted at every point with some material evidence of the love and devotion of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

## PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

The growth of Washington is illustrated in Pennsylvania Avenue. In the long stretch from the Capitol to the White House, or close by it, may be seen various landmarks of the past century. A few of the earliest buildings of the city—around which the aroma of historic association clings tenderly—are there; old shops and places of amusement, side by side with fine modern stores, sky-scraper office buildings, and luxurious new hotels.

Within the last few years these reminiscent buildings have grown less in number. According to the Burnham plan of Washington, Pennsylvania Avenue will skirt the long line of magnificent public build-

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ings that will stretch from the Capitol to the Monument. Some of these buildings are already there. When this great plan is finally realized, Pennsylvania Avenue and the beautiful parkway paralleling it will be the very spine and marrow of Washington. All the important activities of the Capital find their source somewhere along its length. All the public functions select it for an avenue of expression.

Compared with the important streets of other cities in the world, Pennsylvania Avenue is not impressive. From Georgetown to the Capitol it is only four and a half miles long, and the important part of it, extending from the White House to the Capitol, is less than half that length. But in significance it has no rival. It is not simply a Washington Street; it belongs to the whole nation.

Every four years it is the scene of the great inaugural procession between the White House and the Capitol. It was there that the victorious Union forces, 230,000 in number, with many trophies of their campaigns, were reviewed at the close of the Civil War.

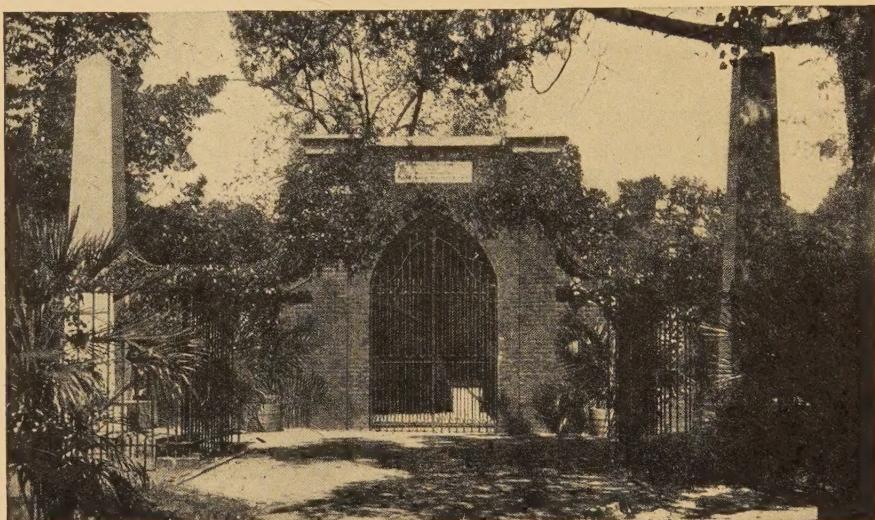
Writers in poetry and prose have celebrated the avenue in different terms. It has been called by some "the Artery of the Nation," and the name is not inapt, for through it pulses the vital energies of our Government.

## MOUNT VERNON THE AMERICAN MECCA

A visit today to Mount Vernon is like a Sabbath in the American heart—a day set apart for sacred things. We feel the effect when we first enter the grounds. At the left of the lane is the old formal garden with its box maze, just as it was in Washington's time. At the right lies the wide expanse of tree-enclosed bowling green and the lawn with its old sun dial.

Everything at Mount Vernon is eloquent of Washington. All that is there was either his or bears some historic relation to him. The preservation of Mount Vernon was a noble public service, and the fine thought that inspired it is equaled by the taste with which the work has been done. While filled with relics of rare historic interest, it has the atmosphere not of a museum, but of home. In the house, the attached buildings and grounds, the spirit of Washington abides, and visitors, undisturbed by jarring influences, can enter into the home life of our first Commander-in-Chief and come to appreciate him as a man.

The priceless possessions in furniture, art, books, instruments and general household articles are too numerous to mention, let alone describe. As far as possible Mount Vernon has had its original contents restored; the other articles to be found there are of the time and illustrate the do-



TOMB OF WASHINGTON

mestic life of the day. And when the house and all its contents have been examined, and we have gathered from them a sense of intimate personal relation to Washington, we go down to the vine covered tomb, and, as we gaze through the iron gateway upon the marble sepulchres of George and Martha Washington we seem to feel their actual presence.

It is disturbing to think that, but for the splendid public spirit of one patriotic woman, Mount Vernon might not have been preserved for the American people. It was Miss Anne Pamela Cunningham who brought about the movement to preserve the place as a national memorial.

When Washington died in 1799 and Martha Washington in 1802, Mount Vernon descended to Bushrod Washington, a Justice of the Supreme Court. At his death in 1829 it passed through the hands of John Augustine Washington, then to his widow, and in 1855 to her son. It was his purpose to sell the place when Miss Cunningham secured an option. The task of securing the property was not easy. She was not able to interest Congress. She finally succeeded in arousing the women of the country, and "The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association of the Union" was formed. This Association bought the property in 1858, and, in the years since, have added to its possessions and have managed and cared for it, until it stands now the true "Mecca" for all who cherish the memory of "The Father of Our Country."

## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

### BOOKS ON THE CITY OF WASHINGTON

- History of the United States Capital . . . *Glenn Brown*  
History of the Washington Monument *Frederick L. Harvey*  
The Story of Washington, the National Capital *C. B. Todd*  
Historic Towns of the Southern States . . . *L. P. Powell*  
Mount Vernon and Its Associations . . . *B. J. Lossing*  
Improvement of Washington City . . . *Glenn Brown*
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